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RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ZAGREB 000527

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [XF](#) [IR](#) [HR](#)
SUBJECT: MESIC DECLINES IRANIAN INVITATION

REF: 05 ZAGREB AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Greg Delawie for reasons 1.5 (b)
& (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: President Stjepan Mesic declined an invitation last week from Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad to visit Tehran, special presidential advisor for international relations Budimir Loncar told Ambassador Frank on April 21. When the Iranian Ambassador to Croatia presented the invitation, Mesic replied that his crowded schedule would not allow a visit this year, which Loncar described as a polite refusal.

12. (C) This decision marks a hiatus in the exchange of presidential visits after Mesic hosted President Mohammad Khatami in March 2005 (reftels). Local press interpreted the refusal as a nod to U.S. interests in advance of the VPOTUS visit next month. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

13. (C) Vesna Klaic, head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Eurasia division, told PolOff April 24 that Croatia has recently become more cautious in its relations with Iran, postponing regularly scheduled bilateral meetings after inflammatory statements from President Ahmadi-Nejad. Croatia will follow the European Union's lead when it comes to Iran-related decisions in the U.N., Klaic said.

14. (C) According to Klaic, Croatia would be unhappy to see the U.N. Security Council impose economic sanctions on Iran, as potential trade remains Zagreb's main interest in ties with Tehran. While bilateral trade remains relatively insignificant at approximately \$7 million annually, the GoC perceives Iran as a lucrative market for Croatian products such as pharmaceuticals, machinery, ships, and consumer goods. FRANK